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REVIEWS AND NOTES

THE SOUNDS AND HISTORY OF THE GERMAN LANGUAGE. By E. Prokosch, Professor of Germanic Languages in the University of Texas. New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1916. v+212.

The title is, perhaps, a little more comprehensive than the book. Should not a history of the German language include the development of syntactical, as well as phonological and morphological forms? But this was not in the plan of the author.

Of the two parts of the book, "Part, I, German Phonetics," is, in my judgment, by far the more deserving of appreciation and praise. It shows the author as possessed of thorough training, a delicate ear, keen appreciation of the characteristic weaknesses and needs of American students and, on the whole, good pedagogic sense. I would recommend it heartily to the teachers of German in this country for careful study.

I am less well pleased with the second, and larger part, the "History of the German Language."

The author of this book is known through a number of articles in learned journals as a scholar of breadth and daring. If this were the proper place and occasion, I should be glad to pay him my compliments on these qualities. Independence, and even daring, is to be admired in an article or a book written for the expert: it stimulates and furnishes food for thought even if it only calls forth our opposition; and Prokosch, in his articles, does in no feeble way support his views, and theories.

But these qualities and inclinations, professedly curbed, are, in my judgment, still far too little curbed, in an "Introduction to the Phonetics and History of the German Language that is simple enough to be intelligible to students without linguistic erudition," and here they lay our author open to criticism.

An introduction to a subject in which, for some time, the student has to make all further progress under the guidance of scholars holding different views, should hardly promulgate ideas by no means universally accepted, least of all promulgate them with a definiteness and assurance that leave little room for doubt in the mind of the beginner. In itself, I think, there is no more wholesome mental attitude for any prospective scientist, surely none for a prospective philologist, than that of doubt and inquiry, and the average undergraduate is all too much inclined to take printed statements on faith.

The tendency to present "heterodox" or revolutionary views, and to present them with too great finality, are, in my judgment, the outstanding failings of a book which, on every page, gives proof of its author's learning and thoroughness. Perhaps also in the matter of organizing the material with a view to greater perspicuity and clearness a second edition might make some improvement possible. It would lead beyond the scope of this review, and would probably serve but little purpose to enumerate any larger number of instances in which I should consider greater modesty of statement in place. One of them is the assumption that the home of the Indo-Europeans was along the Baltic coast, perhaps in the present Prussian province of Brandenburg. There is probably as much ground for placing it there, as in any other place, but it is still but a theory, on which I should hardly venture to base the whole development of the two sound shifts. With it goes an assurance as to the relative time of the various migrations for which the reader should be glad to have some historical proof adduced. I think it is still better to say, with Behaghel, that of the attempts at *explaining* the processes of these shifts, the second as well as the first, so far none have led to a satisfactory result. The author himself half apologizes, half exults, over this phase of his book, with a wholly justifiable exultation of the discoverer. For in his introduction he expressly states that he has felt himself compelled to deviate from commonly accepted philological dogma and "to follow a more independent course in characterizing the German tongue as a direct and nearly unbroken development of the Indo-European parent language, evolved by the continuous action of a homogeneous set of phonetic and psychological tendencies." "Leaving aside the scientific aspect of my theory—he continues—this system, through its consistent linking of phonetics and historical grammar, cannot fail to make the study of both more useful to the student than an independent treatment of these branches of linguistic science could be." But it seems to me a "theory" should first be scientifically so well established that it finds all but universal acceptance before an integral part of an Introduction to the subject is confidently based on it. I should perhaps find less fault with this, if I were not of the opinion that too many philologists operate on principles not sufficiently warranted. In particular the assumption that all or most sound changes can be *explained* from so-called phonetic tendencies seems to me precarious. We have no means of knowing "phonetic tendencies" except as we arrive at them from successive stages of a given dialect. Where we have access to the outward history of a dialect, and can know, in particular, that it has not been exposed to outward disturbing influences, perhaps, but only perhaps, it is safe to postulate given phonetic tendencies, as it certainly is, under similar circumstances, to state syntactic leanings. But in case of languages whose outward history is

wholly inaccessible, there must be little assurance in assigning causes for any given change, except in rare instances. Thus all philologists are tolerably agreed as to the underlying cause of Quantitative Gradation. Similar certainty of our author as to the processes involved in the changes known as Verner's Law, is unwarranted.¹ When we are so wholly at a loss to account for divergencies in more modern dialects, how can we have much assurance when dealing with ages so far remote? What, for example, explains the presence of nasalization in the English of the Middle West of the U. S.? And, after all, what have we explained when we speak of a phonetic tendency? What is it? An inborn inclination in a given set of people to speak one way rather than another? There is no psychological consideration calling for *progress* in a given direction, is there? Why not rather say, in most cases, changes of such and such a nature took place: what occasioned them, we do not know: *ignoramus et ignorabimus*, with Du Bois-Reymond. When no positive knowledge is possible, does it not seem strange, e.g., that "the Germanic phonetic tendencies happen to be diametrically opposite to both the Celtic and the Slavic tendencies, the former going in the direction of strengthened, both of the latter in the direction of weakened articulation," when we remember that the Celtic and Slavic languages as well as the Germanic are Indo-European? Why should, of all the emigrating Indo-European peoples, the Germanic be the only ones to preserve the old phonetic tendencies, and why should these tendencies, among them only, "lead to a remarkably uniform development along definite lines"? Did not the portion of the Germanic people among whom this development was the more complete, i.e., the High German portion, also emigrate from the old home and come in contact with Celtic tribes? And how do we know just what were the phonetic tendencies of the Indo-Europeans, before they had separated into widely different tribes; how do we know that they were just the ones continued among the Germanic branch? What is there, in the other Indo-European languages, to confirm the Germanic tendency as essentially Pre-Indo-European? Here at least, out of the mouth of two or three witnesses the truth must be established.

Also in the treatment of Gradation the author shows more than customary assurance. For psychological reasons, we are told, but not what psychological reasons,² front vowels are generally pronounced with a greater tension of the vocal chords than the back vowels. And then: "In general, we can say that the vowel

¹ Incidentally, I have been unable to find any corroboration of the statement on page 114, that this law was first discovered by Sievers.

² Similarly also the change from I.E. to Germanic stress is ascribed to psychological causes.

e (at least in the roots of words) still stands out rather clearly as denoting a stronger present interest of the speaker (being used especially in the present tense of verbs) while *o* indicates comparative indifference and is, therefore, pre-eminently used in verbal nouns." (p. 106) Aside from the fact that time contrasts grew out of the distinctions between Aspects (or Modality, p. 154) it does not seem apparent why a present tense and a verb should necessarily involve a greater present interest than a past tense or a verbal noun. Why not rather say, again, and still be in good company, the cause of Qualitative Gradation we do not know.

Again, in the explanation of Mutation it is stated all too positively, (in spite of the author's article in the I. F., xxx) that "the general phonetic tendencies of the Germanic languages do not admit of any change of consonants under the influence of either following or preceding vowels," although it is refreshing to learn here, as in a few other instances, that the cause of mutation is not definitely known.

If I have in these, as in a goodly number of other places, covered the margins of my copy with question marks, it is indicative, not of a lack of interest on my part, nor of a lack of suggestiveness on the part of the author, but rather of the contrary. BUT—who is going to put in the question marks for the reader to whom this book is professedly addressed?

TOBIAS DIEKHOFF.

Ann Arbor, Mich., April, 1917.

GOTTFRIED KELLER AS A DEMOCRATIC IDEALIST.

By Edward Franklin Hauch, Ph.D. N. Y., Columbia University Press. 1916. (Diss.)

Gottfried Keller's life (1819-1890) spans eight decades of the 19th century, a period which witnessed more political ferment and upheaval than perhaps any similar period in recorded history. For this reason alone it would have been of interest to examine the political views of any broad-minded man of letters who saw these things in the making. But Keller's peculiar situation enhances this intrinsic interest not a little: a citizen of a small but ardently independent and democratic state, he could view with some aloofness the changing scenes on the stage of Europe, yet apply to his judgment of them the democratic ideas and ideals which his own land took for its own. And more than this, although a Swiss by birth and conviction, he was enrolled in that greater Germany of the mind and the spirit that testifies so eloquently to the power and influence of German thought in 19th century Europe. Hence the ties which kept him in close touch not only with the particu-